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ABSTRACT

This report, resulting from a visit to Czechoslovakia and Poland to conduct preliminary research for the 1991 Projects in International Education Research (PIER) workshop on the educational systems of Czechoslovakia and Poland, presents information on the status of educational systems of both countries. Historical descriptions of the educational system of both countries, including elementary, secondary, and higher education are presented. Implications of historical status for the present, current measures taken to improve/change the status of higher education and the areas to be monitored for both countries are also discussed. It is concluded that the educational problems faced in the two countries are enormous, and this includes the quality of secondary instruction, the educational dislocations inevitable in the transition from controlled economies to competitive free market economies and the elaborations of new and only partially understood educational legislation. (LPT)

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Working Paper # 14

Update on the Educational Systems of Poland and Czecho-Slovakia

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This working paper reports on a trip to Czecho-Slovakia and Poland in June, 1990 in preparation for the PIER (Projects in International Education Research) Workshop scheduled for May, 1991. The PIER Workshop leaders, Josef Silny, Edward Devlin, and Frederick Lockyear, visited Prague, Bratislava, and Warsaw to make contacts and begin preliminary research for the workshop report.

The PIER: Poland and Czecho-Slovakia Workshop has received support from the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the TOEFL Policy Council, Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc., the Graduate Management Admissions Council, and the International Education Research Foundation.

The paper was prepared by Edward Devlin of Monterey Peninsula College, and Joseph Silny of the University of Miami.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In June, 1990, Josef Silny (University of Miami), Frederick Lockyear, (International Advisory Services, Seattle), and Edward Devlin (Monterey Peninsula College) undertook a trip to Warsaw, Prague and Bratislava. The purpose of this trip was to establish preliminary contacts for the PIER (Projects for International Education Research) workshop on the educational systems of Poland and Czecho-Slovakia scheduled for May, 1991 (for which Mr. Silny will be Project Director, Mr. Lockyear, Associate Project Director, and Mr. Devlin, Project Editor). In addition to the usual logistic and contact foundations, the dramatic and rapidly shifting social conditions in the two countries at this time suggested strongly that some preliminary investigation of the state of education would be extremely useful in developing an understanding of the transitions for initial drafts and the final report.

In each city visited, Mr. Silny had made initial contact and had arranged for an itinerary of contact visits to be prepared. In Poland, the initial contact was with Dr. Stanisław Puchała, Director of the Department for International Cooperation, Ministry of National Education. As The Federative Czech and Slovak Republics maintain cooperative but distinctly separate Ministries of Education, it was necessary to visit both Prague, the capital of Bohemia, and Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia.

In Prague, the principal contact was Dr. Miroslav Hušek, Associate Director of the Department of Foreign Relations, Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. In Bratislava, the principal contact was Dr. Pavol Demeš. Director of the Department of Foreign Relations, Slovak Academic Information Agency, Slovak Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Early in the discussions in Poland, it became clear that the Workshop would have to have a triple focus: a stable past from which we will continue to see documents; a present which is characterized by organizational turmoil but which will nevertheless be producing students; and a future which is as yet quite unclear but the interpretation of which will benefit greatly from present guidelines, however murky. The same multiplicity of focus would also prove to be appropriate in Czecho-Slovakia.

II. POLAND

1. Recent Historical Setting

Although a number of educational patterns have been used between the post-World War II period and the present, the principal structure is well-established: eight years of primary education, followed by one of three tracks: general secondary education of four years (sometimes called either "Gymnasium" or "Lyceum") leading to a Maturity Certificate and specifically to higher education; technical secondary education of four years, similar to general secondary, but including a strong technical component, also leading to a Maturity Certificate and either to employment at a technically-skilled level or to higher education; and vocational education of two or three years, leading to employment.

Further education for non-secondary vocational students was often provided by employer-sponsored educational programs, rarely, but potentially, leading to a Maturity Certificate and qualification for higher education.

As university admission was strictly limited, a large number of general secondary graduates were not admitted. These secondary graduates, however, had not received any technical training, and were therefore unsuited for employment. A system of "post-Lyceum" colleges was established for supplemental training, upon completion of which successful students received what has been described to us as the equivalent of a second Maturity Certificate.

Admission to either a university or to a technological university (sometimes called a Polytechnic) was by competitive examination plus supplemental consideration based on Communist party or class background. The total number of admittees and their distribution by discipline was strictly controlled by the Ministry of National Ed-

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ucation, based on projected employment priorities and requirements. First degrees awarded were either four-year *Inżynir* or five-year *Magister* degrees.

Graduate education was provided by the universities, which granted the *Doktor* degree requiring from three to seven years, three examinations and a publicly defended thesis (a demonstration of professional skills rather than a significant original contribution to a field of study).

Those seeking university faculty status would continue for the *Doktor Habilitatus* ("Habilitated Doctor") degree, requiring a second doctoral thesis which had to be a significant original contribution, and which had to be accepted for publication by a major academic press and reviewed by an anonymous panel of scholars. Finally, the candidate was required to pass a comprehensive faculty examination and to receive validation by the Ministry of National Education and by one of the reviewers.

A useful understanding of the present turmoil in Polish education depends on an awareness of certain past constraints. For example, as the universities were seen as centers of dissent, the policy of the government was to restrict quite severely the funds given; the buildings of the University of Warsaw, perhaps the most prestigious university in Poland, have received no major maintenance for more than twenty-five years.

Particularly onerous, it was stressed to us many times, were the requirement of Russian language study and the obligation to use only curricular materials provided by the government, which, of course, could only provide such materials as conformed to the state philosophy, although the Ministry of National Education indicated that the influence of communist ideology in many courses began to be phased out in 1980.

2. Implications for the Present

The long-term results of the latter circumstance are viewed by Polish educators as singularly disastrous: for the most part, social sciences as taught were considered to be nonsensical. History was regarded by many as largely fiction, and Philosophy (Marxism and Leninism) only as an obligatory and unpleasant exercise.

Some consequences, long-term and resistant to solution, are apparent in the current state of education:

a. Since primary and secondary teachers were required to teach a despised curriculum, and were very badly paid to do so, teaching became a profession of "negative selection". Generally, and with significant exceptions, only those poorly fitted for other professions became teachers. This legacy still remains, and the question is now asked what to do with 600,000 relatively weak teachers, especially the thousands of Russian language teachers.

b. As many content areas of university subjects were not taught for ideological reasons, there are no native cadres for instruction in those fields, even though a very large demand now exists;

c. Despite efforts to balance employment, a vast majority of professional teachers are women, partly because the salaries in the teaching profession are insufficient to support a family;

d. Because educators were required to teach a fixed curriculum, with no deviation tolerated, and because they are now required to create curricula themselves, there exists a corps of educators who, upon being told to be independently creative, can, as one official said, only ask for directions as to how to do so.

e. According to the Ministry of National Education, the availability of new texts is lagging behind the sweeping changes in curriculum, and teachers are not flexible enough to fill in the gaps. For the time being, teachers are working from supplemental update bulletins from the Ministry, particularly in subjects previously "undiscussed."

3. Current Measures

In large part, the confusion currently present in Polish education is due to the uncertainties about the provisions of the new comprehensive education

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law. As of June, the law was being hotly debated in the Polish Parliament, the Sejm, with contradictory opinions as to its likely outcome. It was assumed by those with whom we spoke that a law would be passed around the first part of July, although it has not been passed as of the writing of this report.

There is a strong desire on the part of the current leadership of Poland not to be vengeful in its reaction to former leaders, but to be extremely careful to follow a rule of law. One consequence of this desire is that, currently, there are many members of the educational bureaucracy still holding governmental positions. Once the law is passed, however, it is expected that many changes will take place as most public sector jobs are opened to free competition.

In the institutions of higher education, this change will take place first at the higher levels of administration, with each university free to elect its own top administrators and to establish its own curriculum, matriculation and graduation requirements, hiring and admissions policies. It is expected that there will be great changes in faculty as reorganized programs change personnel needs. Over the next year, there will be increasing independence at lower levels of education as well, with the Ministry providing supportive guidelines and suggestions rather than directives.

4. Areas to be Monitored

As Poland moves from a communist system to a free market economy, there are many areas in which severe dislocation will affect education. In addition, the open door to change has excited many educators to propose new patterns, some of which have a very idealistic and perhaps somewhat impractical tone. Between 1985 and 1988, for example, a "blue-ribbon" panel of educational and social leaders made sweeping proposals for change, most of which can be used as excellent goal directions, but almost all of which require funding that is virtually non-existent. Among the current issues and proposals that should be watched over the next years are the following:

a. Pre-school education has become an obligatory local responsibility. There is current government funding, but this will stop as of 1991.

b. The present system of primary and secondary education administration has four levels: The Ministry of National Education; a Curator for each of Poland's 49 Districts (*Woiwodo*), reporting to the District Administration; local Inspectors, with budget and hiring responsibility at the local level, reporting to the Curator; and a Headmaster at each school, responsible to the Inspector. The new system eliminates the Inspector level, with budgeting and hiring by individual Headmasters responsible to the General Directorate of Curators, each of whom will be appointed by and responsible to the Ministry rather than to a District Administration.

c. For the first time since World War II, private primary and secondary schools are permitted to open under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education. There are up to 40 planned (one half primary and one half secondary). Some will follow the regular state curriculum, and others will follow curricula "agreed to" by the Ministry. The chief limitations on these schools are space and money, with the former even more of a problem than the latter, as the Ministry, wishing to encourage competition with state schools, intends to subsidize the private schools up to 50% of the cost of an equivalent state school. Some see this as a way around a public school system clogged with inadequate teachers, as those teachers hired by private schools would be competing for the positions on a fresh basis.

d. The Roman Catholic Church, by far the largest in Poland, is expanding its role in primary and secondary education. The Synod of Catholic Bishops may apply for Ministry permission to introduce religious subjects into school curricula. The minority religions oppose this expansion.

e. Local fiscal control of primary schools is now at local option, but all funding is required to be local by 1994. It is likely, however, that there will be delays and exceptions due to local poverty. Future funding is anticipated to come from increased taxation of the private sector, with a phased cutback of Ministry funding.

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f. It is the stated goal of the Ministry for National Education to create a curriculum in secondary education consisting of Polish, Mathematics and two optional subjects, with choice of subject and track determined by student profile rather than by employment projections.

g. The Ministry for National Education anticipates that the current proportion of Polish students going on to post-secondary education (10%) will increase, despite the fact that the country cannot currently employ many of its university graduates in fields for which they train.

h. It is expected that more universities may open, including a projected "open" university and possible branch campuses of foreign universities, including some from the United States

i. The University of Warsaw is considering an admissions plan that is an extremely sharp break from tradition: in the past, entrance was tightly limited and highly competitive, with unsuccessful applicants going to less prestigious schools, often outside of those in major cities. The University of Warsaw is considering admitting all secondary schools graduates who apply. The entering class would take general subjects during the first year, at the end of which a selection would be made as to who would continue. It can be expected that this idea, if pursued, will draw powerful opposition from some of the other universities, as it would have the effect of letting the most prestigious schools select the students not only with the best secondary records and examinations, but also the best on the basis of actual university performance. This would mean that the quality of students at the other schools would drop even lower, with some schools likely to close as a result.

j. Quality control in higher education has been the function of the Ministry of National Education, but that role will be sharply reduced, with each university to be responsible for its own quality, if the Education Law is passed in a form most expect. THe University of Warsaw has expressed interest in forming a group of the "strongest" universities to act as mutual self-regulators, with the "weaker" universities to remain under Ministry supervision.

k. There are currently no charges for tuition at universities. It is proposed that charges be levied on students taking longer than the prescribed length of time for a program of study. This is meeting with strong student opposition.

l. As previously mentioned, there are many teachers trained only to teach subjects no longer needed. While both Russian language and Marxism are offered as elective subjects at the universities, almost no one takes the courses. There is an extremely strong interest in English language. So the Poles are faced with an abundance of relatively weak language teachers who cannot teach the language for which there is a demand. "Language Colleges" are to open in October for the purpose of retraining these teachers to teach other languages (English, French, German, Spanish).

m. "Post-graduate" education in Poland is generally similar to what we in the United States would call in-service training and job skills upgrading (as opposed to the previously-mentioned graduate education at the doctoral level). It is usually offered in university settings, and is paid for either by companies for their employees or by individuals. In a situation in which there is no longer guaranteed, planned employment, it is expected that there will be greater and greater competition for a smaller number of available jobs, making upgraded training more necessary. Yet at the same time, there is almost no training money available from companies, themselves struggling from a disadvantaged position to meet Western European competition for the first time.

III. CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

While many of the prospects and concerns of educators and administrators in Poland are common in Czecho-Slovakia as well, there are enough distinct problems and opportunities in the latter to warrant a separate and equally focussed discussion.

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1. Recent Historical Setting

At present, compulsory education in the Czecho-Slovak Federative Republic (CSFR) is 10 years, with an eight-year elementary school leading to one of three tracks: a four-year gymnasium (15% of elementary graduates), a four-year technical secondary school (23%), or a two-to-three year apprentice school (60%). In addition, two percent attend special schools for handicapped or maladjusted children. Both the gymnasium and technical secondary tracks lead to the Maturity Certificate.

Until 1989, elementary and secondary education was controlled entirely by the separate Czech (Prague) and Slovak (Bratislava) Ministries of Education, Youth and Sport, which handled all hiring, curricula and subject syllabi, admission to secondary schools and all other educational issues.

Curricular requirements until 1989 included Civics, Military Preparation, and Russian Language as required subjects. Humanities and social science courses carried communist ideology components. Religious subjects were not offered, and private or religious schools were not allowed to operate.

In higher education, the election of rectors and deans was subject to veto by the Ministries. In general, university elections were only to determine nominees for Ministry approval. For the most part, the Ministries controlled curricula, scheduling, admissions and the awarding of degrees. Funding was entirely through the Ministries.

Up to 1989, general first university degrees were the *Inženýr* (literally translated as "Engineer degree) in technical, agricultural or economic programs, the *Inženýr architekt* in architecture and town planning, and a diploma indicating completion of study in a specific field for graduates of classical universities, which completion also required the passing of a state examination (often including a thesis and defense).

Prior to 1975, students completing undergraduate university diploma study could write an expanded thesis and sit for an examination known as the *rigorosa* " rigorous examination," which covered the material studied in the undergraduate program. This was usually completed within one year, and resulted in the awarding of a Doctoral degree (in Philosophy, Natural Sciences, Medicine, Pharmacy, Law, Social and Political Science or Pedagogy). After 1975, the expanded thesis was no longer required. Students had only to pass the rigorous examination. Those students with outstanding results throughout their undergraduate studies who passed the state examinations with excellent grades could be awarded the Doctorate without further examination.

Nursery school teachers are trained in four-year middle pedagogical schools, receiving a Maturity Certificate upon completion.

Primary teacher training continues to be conducted in District Pedagogical Faculties. There is one, either affiliated with a university or independent, for each of the 10 districts of Czecho-Slovakia, offering a four-year program to holders of Maturity Certificates.

Until 1976, secondary teacher training was done exclusively in the Pedagogical Section of the Faculty of Philosophy at each university in Czecho-Slovakia. Since that time, some have also been trained at the District Pedagogical Faculties. Each offers a five-year program, preparing teachers to offer instruction in two subjects. It has been suggested that the best students and instructors were at the Pedagogical Sections of Philosophy Faculties.

Until 1989, almost all scientific research and graduate study in CSFR was done at either the Czech or the Slovak Academy of Science, which received state funding and offered the degrees of Candidate of Science and Doctor of Science (parallel to the USSR degrees).

2. Current Developments

Unlike Poland, which began eliminating ideological components from its curricula as early as 1980, Czecho-Slovakia's educational changes have been compressed into the period since November, 1989. The contrast is easy to see: Poland has many problems, and has proposed a large number of solutions, as impracticable as many of them may

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be. Czecho-Slovakia, on the other hand, has had to meet many of the same challenges, in some cases with little opportunity for prior consideration.

Decentralization of control of primary and secondary education will begin in the 1990 school year. School districts and headmasters will have increased autonomy, with increased power concerning hiring, curriculum, admission of students into secondary programs and all other academic issues previously controlled by the Ministries. Course syllabi will still be provided by the Ministries, but individual schools will be able to change up to 30% of the curriculum and up to 10% of the number of hours of instruction.

Starting in 1990, independent private and church-related schools will be permitted to exist. In Prague, a church-sponsored elementary school and a private gymnasium (emphasizing U.S. style education) were scheduled to open in September, 1990. There is a great deal of interest in independent education, and more will open if suitable space can be found.

Major changes are taking place in the curricula of primary and secondary schools: courses in Civics and Military Preparation have been eliminated; courses in the humanities and social sciences are being completely rewritten; communist ideology components have been dropped from all courses, with emphasis given to pluralism, democracy and patriotism; courses in religion will be offered as options; Russian language is no longer required, but will be offered as an option (probably with little interest), along with English (most popular), French and German.

The number of teachers of English, French and German is inadequate to the demand. There are thousands of teachers of Russian (apparently, not generally gifted teachers), and the intention is to re-train them to teach other languages. Universities have shown very little interest in doing so, however, as they feel the teachers will be quite poor.

In general, low teacher quality will be a challenge for the CSFR. As in Poland, teaching as a profession was one of negative selection, attracting individuals who were not creative nor strong intellectually, who were conformist in outlook and who were willing to follow the official party line. Education was tailored to the average student, with little attention paid to the excellent or poor student. Now the same teachers are expected to teach creatively, with a pluralistic viewpoint, and to be in the vanguard of educational change.

As of the 1990-91 school year, compulsory education will be reduced from ten to nine years. An additional year will be added to the elementary school, so that pre-secondary education will consist of a five-year elementary cycle and a four-year middle school. Although initially the ninth year will be offered only to students not interested in any secondary education (so that the eight-year system will continue to function for those that do), it is expected that within five years the ninth year will become an integral part of the system. In that case, students entering university study will have 13 years of study.

An additional alternative will be offered in a small number of schools: a five year elementary school followed by an eight-year gymnasium. It is our impression that students choosing this alternative are likely to be among the most talented. They will sit for the same examinations and receive the same Maturity Certificate as will students in the other secondary tracks.

While a new Higher Education law was passed on May 4, 1990, many of its provisions were designed to legitimize de facto changes, while others were intended to give general directions, with detailed elaboration expected later. We were informed that the entire law was drafted in the six days between Christmas and New Year's Day, including three days of legal consultation. It is not surprising, therefore, that many confusing and incomplete interpretations exist. The following provisions of the new law take effect as of the Fall semester, 1990:

a. Institutions of higher education are autonomous and independent, with academic freedom guaranteed;

b. Institutions of higher education will develop their own curricula, hire faculty, admit students, and award degrees;

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c. Political organizations cannot be created at institutions of higher education;

d. Higher education will continue to be funded by the state, but institutions can seek non-taxable income from private sources, both foreign and domestic;

e. Each institution will elect an Academic Senate from its faculty members. This Senate will nominate candidates for rectorships and will have the power of approval the rector's choices for pro-rectorships, budget, curricula, and the Scientific Committee nomination of Deans;

f. The Scientific Committee of each institution handles issues involving teaching, research or artistic endeavors of the institution, as well as for making recommendations for faculty appointments and for appointing Deans;

g. The rector reports to the Scientific Committee and to the Minister of Education, with responsibility for the scientific, pedagogical, developmental, economic and informational aspects of each institution, as well as for the appointment of junior faculty;

h. Deans represent their faculties and report to the Academic Senate and to the Rector;

i. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Education will be responsible for the following: provision and monitoring of funds to institutions of higher education; registration of the status of institutions of higher learning; determination, with recommendation of Accrediting Commission, of the right of an institution to award degrees;

j. Outstanding faculty members will be named for three-year appointments by the two republics to a single Accreditation Commission, which will have functions similar to those of U.S. Regional Accrediting Commissions;

k. Admission decisions will be made by the Deans based on the applicants' holding of Maturity Certificates and completion of a competitive entrance examination (except that admission to an academy of performing arts may be permitted for exceptional individuals without the Maturity Certificate);

l. Higher education is to be completed by passing state examinations;

m. Institutions of higher education may offer a new first degree, called a *Bakalář*, of unspecified length or content, with each institution free to decide the requirements for itself;

n. In addition, institutions will continue to offer the same degrees as previously done;

o. Institutions of higher education will design graduate programs (content and length unspecified) leading to the Doctorate, based on lectures, examinations (including a rigorous examination) and independent research;

3. Areas to be Monitored

At the primary and secondary levels, it will be important to monitor the development of the several different new tracks, particularly the elaboration of the nine-year elementary pattern. This will have a great bearing on how U.S. admissions officers view both the CSFR Maturity Certificates and the subsequent university degrees. The efforts of Czecho-Slovakia to upgrade the quality of its primary and secondary programs will also deserve our careful attention over the next few years.

At the post-secondary level, re-interpretation of existing degrees and the creation of three new degrees (*Bakalář*, *Magistr* and *Doktor*), none of which has been completely defined, will require extremely close observation:

a. It is unclear what the *Bakalář* degree will mean, as different institutions have drastically differing interpretations. Many expect it to be three years in length, but some suggest two. What the degree will represent is likewise unclear: one school assumes all entering students will pursue the *Bakalář*, with weaker students exiting at its completion (after as yet non-existent state examinations), and stronger ones continuing for two additional years to complete the *Magistr*; another plans a common year for entering students, at the

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end of which the top 60% of academic achievers will enter a *Magistr* track for four years, while others will be streamed into a terminal *Bakalář* program for two years; at another school, a similar plan will be used, but the streaming will be done after five semesters; and at still others, officials anticipate quite separate programs and do not know if *Bakalář* holders will be able to continue, although it is doubted that many will wish to do so. What *is* clear is that there will be a *Bakalář* degree; little else has been settled.

b. The *Doktor* degree is similarly unclear, with some assuming it to be virtually identical with the Candidate of Science and others not. At the Slovak Technical University, the proposed program is expected to take three years beyond the *Magistr* or Engineer degree, with research done during the entire period. During the first year, students will do independent study and attend special lectures two or three times per week. At the end of the first year, there will be a review of research, and each student will have to pass three to five examinations (at Department option). Doctoral students will be expected to produce original research, to write a dissertation and to present a public defense. Not all doctoral students will be required to teach, and those that do will teach no more than six hours per week.

c. While the *Magistr* seems to be relatively stable in interpretation, some doubt exists even here: the Prague School of Economics has, in the past, given an Engineer degree, but now intends to offer a three-year *Bakalář* and a *Magistr* after two additional years. Officials at the Ministry indicated to us that this is not possible according to the new law. As of this writing, no resolution has been reached.

d. Teacher training may change in line with the new degrees: according to officials of the Pedagogical Section of the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University, it is possible that a three-year *Bakalář* degree will be offered for teachers of grades 1 though 8 (or 9), with two additional years for secondary school teachers leading to a *Magistr*. This is a very tentative suggestion.

IV. CONCLUSION

We feel that we are fortunate in having had a chance to see the educational systems of Poland and Czecho-Slovakia at this time. The revolutionary changes now taking place will undoubtedly not be completely settled for some time to come, but the context of change is clear. In both countries, the direction will be toward decentralized control and pluralistic stances, with Western European and United States models having considerable influence in restructuring.

In our minds, the opportunity to establish strong professional contacts in Poland and Czecho-Slovakia will be fruitful in many ways. First, we have had excellent response from both countries, with educators going out of their way to provide us with materials and with detailed answers to long lists of very complex questions; without this cooperation, our task would be nearly impossible, given the depth and timing of the changes going on. Second, we have experienced a great generosity on the part of our European colleagues in their willingness to continue their support during the actual workshop, both in direct contact and in introductions to other colleagues in different parts of the two countries. Finally, we feel confident that we have already set up a network of mutual interest that will last for many years; the changes we see now taking place are only the first steps. In the long run, what we seek is open exchange of information, students and faculty, and we have taken important steps toward the accomplishment of those objectives.

The problems faced in the two countries are very great: the quality of secondary instruction, the educational dislocations inevitable in the transition from controlled economies of universal employment to competitive free market economies, and the elaborations of new and only partially understood legislation. It is already clear to us that these will be met with enormous energy, common sense and a dynamic good will; it will be our privilege to witness more of the process during the spring of 1991.

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Projects for International Education Research (PIER) is a joint committee of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

PIER is charged with the long-range planning and development of workshops and seminars on the admission of foreign students with specific emphasis on evaluation of their credentials from abroad, and their placement in courses at educational institutions in the United States. These workshops have traditionally involved 15 to 20 participants and two-to-three weeks of in-country review of educational systems. Each workshop produces a report covering several countries and summarizing the group's conclusions and recommendations. The placement recommendations are reviewed by the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials.

Funding for the workshops comes from the private sector in the form of foundation, corporate, and institutional donations, as well as in-kind contributions and exchange-related arrangements. Substantial support frequently comes from host countries. The balance of funds comes from U.S. federal government grants, primarily from the United States Information Agency.

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